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AGRICULTURAL LIBRARIES INFORMATION NOTES

SUBSIDIZED ONLINE SEARCH SERVICE IN AN AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

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No pretense is made here of offering a thorough cost-benefit analysis of online information retrieval in an academic library. And, although the Steenbock Memorial Library has developed a system of online access which is uniquely suited to the needs of its clients, I hasten to add that we would not advocate its adoption as a model system for other agricultural libraries.



Steenbock's "QUICK SEARCH" Service takes place in the midst of the Information Services Desk.

per month) time purchase contract with the BRS System. This connect time is shared by all of the major libraries of the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. Steenbock also has a direct contract with the Lockheed-Dialog System of much

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CATEGORIES OF SEARCHES

The Steenbock Memorial Library is the principal service provider for the 23 academic departments of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences/School of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences of the University of Wisconsin. Steenbock has been involved in online literature retrieval since 1973; it participates in a sizable (60 hours

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smaller scale and with correspondingly higher rates. Our use of the online data base searching systems can be divided into one of the following categories.

Retrospective Search: This is the standard search service; it is "retrospective" in that it offers the greatest depth of coverage of the available services. All data bases of the Lockheed-DIALOG and BRS systems are accessible through the service. The client must pay for connect time and print charges. The average charge in fiscal year 1979/80 was \$12.00 per file. The typical user is a faculty member, or graduate student working with a faculty member, who pays for the search with departmental funds designated for research purposes. Non-university and non-USDA clients must pay a \$0.40 per minute surcharge. Because of the surcharge and a uniform pricing structure for print charges, receipts for the service more than recover the connect time costs.

Quick Search: The Quick Search service is intended to provide limited access to online data bases for library users who would not otherwise be able to afford this type of bibliographic access. It is a cash only service; clients who have research funds available for computer services must use the retrospective search.

The Quick Search service is limited to the online portions of the BRS System. Charges for the service are computed on a per minute basis from logon until logoff at the rate of \$0.25 per minute. The \$0.25 per minute charge does not recover the cost to the library, which is obligated under existing agreements to reimburse the university libraries system at a rate of \$0.50 per minute. The average cost to the user is about

\$3. The Quick Search service is conducted at the Information Services Desk and is offered whenever an attending librarian is available. The search is performed usually within the hour of the request.

Citation Verification and Ready Reference: Use of the online searching service is available at the discretion of reference librarians whenever this option is considered the most efficient means of answering a reference question. It is often the solution of last resort when a librarian is trying to decipher a garbled citation. Online time is usually limited to 1 to 5 minutes for ready reference purposes.

Current Awareness Literature Service (CALS): Steenbock's Information Services staff will act as an intermediary for the USDA-SEA-TIS current awareness service whenever a faculty member or USDA scientist requests our assistance. Profiles are constructed and revised; results are monitored for accuracy and quality. Users who wish to interact directly with the CALS service are free to do so.

BENEFITS TO INFORMATION SERVICES

All of the computer searching services are, to some degree, subsidized. Even in the case of the Retrospective Search service no attempt is made to recover the cost of staff time, training, equipment, or telecommunications cost. The net cost to the library for the Quick Search in fiscal year 1979/80 was \$856. The cost of Citation Verification and Ready Reference is incorporated into other "in house" uses of the online system such as instructional demonstrations, citation verification for interlibrary loan, and information gathering for administrative projects. We use a separate password for in-house use of Lockheed-DIALOG. Connect time cost for this password was \$1,668 in

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1979/80. Total net cost to the Steenbock Library of search service programs in the past fiscal year was \$3,180. This subsidy allowed us to provide 653 Retrospective Searches, 419 Quick Searches and all of the other activities I have described so far. Whether or not the online service is worth the price is, perhaps, a subjective question, but the relative cost certainly compares favorably with the cost of major printed abstracting and indexing tools. There are undeniably substantial indirect costs related to the online search service, the so-called "hidden costs" of staff time, training, increasing interlibrary loan activity, and so on. But those who insist that we make a full accounting of these indirect costs must also allow fair consideration of the indirect benefits derived from the use of the online systems, which brings me, at long last, to my original point, *i.e.*, the benefits of online service to information services.

Productivity: Librarians use the online searching service for the same reasons our clients do: it saves time. Availability of data base access allows us to serve more people, answer more questions and provide a more complete product for our clients. The primary advantage of computer access is its speed of reckoning. In spite of our rhetoric which describes the online searching service as an optional means of gathering information, when a research problem can benefit from this phenomenal speed, there is no realistic alternative to online access.

This should not be interpreted to mean that more use of computer technology will always create more productivity. Knowing when to use the online service is vitally important. There are many types of reference inquiry which cannot be handled by the computer. Computers are very fast, but they cannot evaluate, interpret, or exercise intuition.

Librarians often have a "hunch" about where information might be found; computers never do.

Staff Development: Traditional reference skills and online searching skills reinforce one another. Many manual reference tools are constructed by means of computerized data bases. Knowledge of the capabilities of one format is often helpful in using the other. Because of their awareness of the relative limitations and advantages of manual and online sources, librarians are able to recommend the approach which offers the most efficient solutions to research problems.

Use of online data bases continually presents the librarian with new sources of information. The continual pressure produced by the discovery of new and sometimes esoteric bibliographic sources is not always welcome, but the pressure upon librarians to acquaint themselves with unfamiliar titles is unquestionably developmental. Sometimes the use of the data base information strengthens the conceptual relatedness of information. The wealth of documents information contained in the AGRICOLA data base has fostered a better relationship between the Documents and Information Services Department, departments which are physically separated at Steenbock.

Bibliographic Instruction: Many faculty members regard the online searching service as an indispensable research tool. Within some academic departments an online data base search is an obligatory first step in preparing a research grant proposal. Knowledge of computerized information retrieval has become a necessary component in the education of future researchers. Discussion of online access to information is included in all general library orientation and almost half of our subject oriented classroom instruction is exclusively devoted to a description of the


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capabilities of the online searching service. An increasing number of faculty members require that students conduct a Quick Search as a preliminary step in writing a term paper.

An interesting type of one-to-one bibliographic instruction has developed within the context of the Quick Search service. Because of the public setting for the Quick Search many undergraduate students become aware of the computer search service before they become acquainted with more traditional sources of information. Their expectation of the service are very high, in some cases absolutely Star Trekian. As a result, the Quick Search interview must include discussion of what the computer cannot do as well as the capabilities of the online system. It has provided a valuable opportunity for library instruction for a type of student who might not otherwise ask for help.

Public Relations and Image: Perhaps this point ought not be overemphasized. Online searches which are ineptly or inappropriately done will not win the library friends. Nonetheless, librarians are uniquely positioned to use the system to best advantage. They have no obligation to sell the service or promote its use unnecessarily. They have the volume of experience and the opportunity to develop and update their searching skills. The value of a librarian as an intermediary in the information exchange process is impressively demonstrated in a timely and intelligent online search. A good example: a recent prize-winning search submitted in a BIOSIS competition on the subject of bird song dialects required only 1.2 minutes to submit the strategy and collect the product. This amounts to a connect-time cost of less than \$2 for a quantity of bibliographic research that would require many hours to accomplish manually. When service

like this can be provided to the user at equivalent cost or less, librarians and libraries may not need public relations or image building.

Librarians will ask how they can provide any sort of access to information, free or otherwise, without adequate financial support. Information is not free, but many of the people who depend upon us for access to information, especially agricultural information, cannot always "recover" all of our costs for us. Librarians who work in public or non-profit institutions must choose between subsidized access to online data bases or access for the small minority of our clients who are able to pay full cost. Free access means, and has always meant, access which is publicly, institutionally, or collectively subsidized. It is justifiable for the same reason it has always been justifiable; that is, free access to information fundamental to the public good and necessary for a constitutionally proscribed level of individual freedom. 

WETLANDS ROLE IN MANAGEMENT OF WASTEWATER

A new 16mm film entitled "Wetlands - Our Natural Partners in Wastewater Management" describes research on the use of wetlands as an alternative to conventional methods for advanced or tertiary treatment of wastewater.

For information regarding availability of the film, contact:

Dr. Edward H. Bryan, Program Manager
Directorate for Engineering and
Applied Science
National Science Foundation
Washington, D.C. 20550

The film is available on TV cassettes also.

AGRIS SINCE THE FIRST TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

by Abraham Lebowitz
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Food and Agriculture Organization

Editor's Note: Condensed From a
Paper Presented to the Second
Technical Consultation of AGRIS
Participating Centres, Rome, Italy,
May 12 - 15, 1980

In the five years since it became an operational system and particularly in the two years since the First Technical Consultation, AGRIS (International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology) has come to be recognized as the standard bibliographic information system in agriculture. It has made its mark not so much because of the size or completeness of its data base, its published bibliography, but because it represents a joint venture of developed and developing countries working together under the auspices of the UN to solve a common problem.

SIZE

AGRIS size as of March 1980 consisted of liaison offices and input centres in 102 countries and ten multinational organizations, and the Coordinating Centre at FAO headquarters in Rome and Processing Unit in Vienna. As of April 1980 there were 500,705 items in the data base including 132,072 added in 1978 and 113,708 in 1979. The reduced input in 1979 was due to the fact that very little was received from the USA which was in the process of changing its computer system. In fact, the missing U.S. input has already been supplied and will be added to the data base in 1980. If we disregard the anomalous situation of the U.S. input and compare only non-U.S. input it will be noted that this increased from 83,083 items in 1978 to 94,774 in 1979,

a growth of 14 percent. Despite this growth in input we feel that we are covering only about half of the literature in scope for the system. This is due to many factors: some countries contribute no input at all; in others a fixed budget is allotted to AGRIS which determines the quantity of input; in yet others the input centre does not handle certain subjects or forms of documents. The AGRIS Coordinating Centre has begun to make a concentrated effort, to expand and improve participation in the system.

INPUT

In 1978 input was received from 72 countries and five inter- or multinational organizations including FAO itself. In 1979 these figures had grown to 76 and seven, respectively. In 1978 somewhat more than one-third of the input reached AGRIS through the three large multinational input centres, (CEC; Commission of the European Communities; IICA/CIDIA; Inter-American Centre for Agricultural Documentation and Information; and ALBA; Agricultural Information Bank for Asia), but in 1979 this proportion had risen to almost half. Input from the Soviet Union rose from an average of 1,290 items in each of the first four years of AGRIS to 2,476 items in 1979 after the recommendation by the First Technical Consultation (May 1978) that it increase its input had been conveyed to the USSR.

In keeping with the philosophy under which AGRIS represents a true partnership of developing and developed countries, the number of items from developing countries increased from 17,504 (13.3 percent) in 1978 to 25,959 (22.8 percent) in 1979.

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TYPES OF COVERAGE

Even though 40 languages are represented in AGRIS input more than two-thirds of the 1978 and half of the 1979 input was for documents in English.

Five languages, (English, German, Spanish, French, and Italian), accounted for 87.8 percent of the input in 1978 and 81.3 percent in 1979.

Journal articles account for approximately three quarters of the data base and monographs for almost all the rest. Some patents, reports, standards, and an occasional map are received but no drawings, films or phonographic materials. On the other hand, there is extensive coverage of non-conventional materials, approximately 20,000 items per year (15.9 percent of the 1978 and 17.9 percent of the 1979 data base). That this percentage is particularly high for developing countries can be illustrated by the fact that 70.8 percent of the 1979 input coming through AIBA was non-conventional while only 3.5 percent of that from the Commission of the European Communities was so classified.

The following table presents a summary of the primary subject categories occurring in the AGRIS data. The major 'agricultural' categories, plant and animal production, represent about half the data base. On the other hand, forestry and fisheries, with only about 3 percent of the data base each, are not well represented, possibly because some of our input centres are in organizations not concerned with these fields.

AGRIS by Primary Subject Category

Category	1978 %	1979 %
Plant production	25.8	28.0
Animal production	23.2	23.1
Plant protection	11.9	12.5
Economics	9.7	8.1
Food science	7.3	5.8
Human nutrition	4.8	3.9
Forestry	3.0	3.6
Fisheries	2.8	2.7
Machinery & buildings	2.6	2.7
Natural resources	2.3	3.3
Administration	1.9	1.3
Pollution	1.6	1.6
Agriculture	1.3	0.6
Others	1.8	2.8

AGRINDEX

Agrindex was published and distributed regularly in 1978 and 1979. The subscription price, which was held at \$250 for three years, was raised to \$400 after an analysis of a projected increase in the size of *Agrindex*, number of subscriptions and world-wide inflation. The size of *Agrindex* is expected to increase substantially in 1980 as a result of several factors. We anticipate increased input partly to compensate for the 1979 shortfall and partly because several contributing centers are planning increases. The new Classification Scheme with its more detailed breakdown of the subject matter will result in a slight increase in the main entry section (as a result of having to print additional headings), and an almost 50 percent increase in the commodities index. At the recommendation of the First Technical Consultation, we have also added something completely new, a geographical index, which will add about another 10 percent to the total size of *Agrindex*. An 11,000 item issue will now consist of about 800 pages. Because of lack of funds and page limitations, we were not able to publish either cumulative indexes to volumes IV and V or to

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include in *Agrindex* itself the list of journals covered. As of March 1980 we are distributing AGRIS tapes to 25 national and multi-national centers.

AGRIS ONLINE

The great power of the AGRIS data base can only be fully realized when it is searched interactively by computer. We have also made the data base available online, on an experimental basis, to a group of European countries on the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) computer. A possibility currently under study is that of providing access to anyone having an ordinary telex capable of telexing Vienna. As this includes virtually every country in the world, this might be a way of making the power of AGRIS available to all developing countries.

In 1980 we hope to complete a survey to determine to what use AGRIS tapes are put, what hardware and software are used, and similar information.

SUMMARY

To sum up, the last two years have been a time of progress, not spectacular leaps ahead but of steady operation of the system and step by step advances. Many of the recommendations of the First Technical Consultation were not tied to a specific timetable. We have tried to implement as many of them as possible and expect to implement more in 1980 and 1981. I must give credit to the staff of AGRIS who worked well despite the fact that for more than half the period in question the post of the Head of the AGRIS Coordinating Centre was vacant. After five years of operation it is appropriate to evaluate our progress and chart our future course.

LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION IN AGRIS AND AGRICOLA

AGRICOLA (1968-77)			AGRIS (1975-Aug. 1980)		
<u>English</u>		61%	<u>English</u>		55%
U.S.	37%				
Other English	24%				
<u>All Slavic</u>		15%	<u>Russian</u>		2%
Russian	8.8%				
Other Slavic	5.8%				
<u>Romance</u>		10%	<u>Romance</u>		24%
*			Spanish	10%	
			French	8%	
			Italian	4%	
			Portuguese	2%	
<u>German</u>		8%	<u>German</u>		7%
<u>Oriental</u>		3%	<u>Oriental</u>		6%
<u>All Other Languages</u>		3%	<u>All Others</u>		6%
		100%			100%

N=1,013,230

N=558,032

English in both cases refers to the language of the article even though it might be in a Japanese or Norwegian journal.

Wallace C. Olsen
Library Operations
Division
National Agricultural
Library

* 1977 AGRICOLA Romance language % were: French, 4%; Spanish, 3%; Italian, 1%; and Portuguese, 1%.

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(BIBLIOGRAPHIES, Continued on page 10)

QUICK BIBLIOGRAPHY SERIES

The bibliographies in this series are primarily computerized online or batch bibliographies emanating from searches performed by the IIS Reference Staff in response to customer requests.

Searches are selected for inclusion based on the currency of the topic, interest among clientele, relative length (approximately 150 citations or more) and probable value to a larger audience. All titles in this series will be listed for six months. Revisions or updates will be re-numbered and reannounced. Only one copy of a title will be sent; however, requestors may make copies. To request a copy of a Quick Bibliography send the title, series number, and a return addressed label to:

Reference Branch
Technical Information Systems, SEA,
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Beltsville, MD 20705

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Bibliography on the Non-Game Freshwater Fishes of North America, 1960-1980. Compiled by Thomas M. Baugh. For information contact: Compiler, Research Information Group, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, USDA, Forest Service, 507 - 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401.

A Cavity-Nesting Bird Bibliography -- Including Related Titles on Forest Snags, Fire, Insects, Disease, and Decay. Compiled by William C. Fischer and B. Riley McClelland. For information contact: Thomas M. Baugh, Research Information Group, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, USDA, Forest Service, 507 - 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401.

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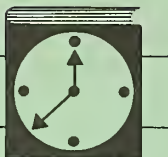
"Popular Reporting of Agricultural Science: Strategies for Improvement," *National Agricultural Science Information Conference.* Ames, Iowa, October 22-26, 1979. [Washington, D.C.,] U.S. Department of Agriculture and Land-Grant Universities Cooperating, [1980] 133 p. Available from Nancy Sowers, Chief, Publications Requests and Distribution Section, SEA Information, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. All conference participants will automatically receive a copy.

Regenerating Oaks in Upland Hardwood Forests. Proceedings of The 1979 John S. Wright Forestry Conference. Harvey A. Holt and Burnell C. Fischer. (West Lafayette) Dept. of Forestry and Natural Resources and the Indiana Cooperative Extension Service, Purdue University, 1979. Free. Order from publisher.

**Regulating Pesticides.* Committee on Prototype Explicit Analyses for Pesticides, Environmental Studies Board; Commission on Natural Resources, National Research Council (National Academy of Sciences, 1980. 301 p. ISBN 0-309-02946-5; (\$11.00).

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AGRICULTURE DATEBOOK



November 16-19: *NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UNIVERSITIES AND LAND GRANT COLLEGES*. Peachtree Plaza Hotel, Atlanta, Ga. For information contact Ruth N. Smith, Suite 710, 1 Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036. Tel: (202) 293-7120.

The theme of the Agricultural Division is Energy Impact - Leadership From the Land-Grant Community in a High Energy Cost Society.

November 17-21: *9th PAMAMERICAN SEMINAR ON SEEDS*. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Contact: Secretaria Administrativa, Corrientes 127-5° Pisco-Of. 513 (1043) Buenos Aires - Republica Argentina.

November 30-December 6: *ARID LAND RESOURCE INVENTORIES, DEVELOPING COST-EFFICIENT METHODS*. La Paz, Mexico. Sponsored by IUFRO Forest Resource Inventory Subject Group, SAF Inventory Working Group, Sub-secretariat of Forest & Wildlife, Mexico, Mexican Association of Professional Foresters (AMPF), USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management. Contact: H. Gyde Lund, *Program Chairman, USDA Forest Service RMF & RES, 240 W. Prospect St., Ft. Collins, CO 80526.

December 1-2: *ASAE CONFERENCE ON CROP PRODUCTION WITH CONSERVATION IN THE 80's*. Palmer House, Chicago, IL. Contact: John C. Siemans, Chairman, Conference on Crop Production with Conservation in the 80's, Agricultural Engineering Department, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801 (telephone: 217-333-2854).

December 9-11: *THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT*. UNESCO Bldg., Paris, France. For information contact the conference at 21 rue Danielle Casanova, 75001 Paris, France.

(PUBLICATIONS, Continued from page 11)
**Research Priorities in Tropical Biology*. Committee on Research Priorities in Tropical Biology; Division of Biological Sciences, Assembly of Life Sciences, National Research Council (National Academy of Sciences, 1980. 128 p. ISBN 0-309-03-4309; \$8.25).

Taxonomic Aspects of African Economic Botany. Proceedings of the IX Plenary Meeting of A.E.T.F.A.T. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 18-23, March, 1978. G. Kunkel. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, September 1979. 250 p. 11. Surface postage paid. Order from: The Secretary, Bentham - Moxon Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, England TW9 3AE.

Who's Who in World Agriculture. Compiled by the Editorial Staff of Francis Hodgson. Edinburgh. Francis Hodgson, 1979. 2 vols. \$175.50 (U.S.) ISBN 0-582-90106-5 ISBN 0-582-90104-9 (Vol. 1) ISBN 0-582-90105-7 (Vol. 2). Order from: Francis Hodgson, Longman Group Ltd., 43-45 Annandale St., Edinburgh, Scotland EH7 4AT, United Kingdom.

Documents marked with an asterisk () are available from the Office of Publications, National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.



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